



Michigan Association for Sexual Health  
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*Our Mission :To unify and empower individuals and organizations that promote youth sexual health and the prevention of risky behaviors.*

Kelly Haight, board member, Michigan Association for Sexual Health  
Testimony before the House Judiciary Committee regarding House Bill 5163  
September 9, 2009

Chairman Meadows, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you briefly about the Reproductive Rights Legislation, specifically House Bill 5163. My name is Kelly Haight, and I come before you on behalf of the *Michigan Association for Sexual Health (MASH)* Board of Directors, and our association's state-wide membership. MASH's mission is "to unify and empower individuals and organizations that promote youth sexual health and the prevention of risky behaviors." Our membership includes organizations from around the state which:

- have a combined mailing list of over 23,000.
- receive funding from approximately 5,000 donors.
- serve over 17,000 students annually around the state.

Our organization and our members believe that primary prevention continues to be the *best, healthiest, and most effective strategy* in educating the youth of the State of Michigan, in regards to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and especially sex. To that end, we are working directly with local school districts who share this belief and who feel our curriculum/programs fill a valuable role within their school systems.

*MASH*, its Board of Directors, and members are opposed to HB 5163 for several reasons:

- 1) This legislation would override local school programs. There are many districts around the state that have elected to a) not teach sex education or b) have elected to teach abstinence-until-marriage education in favor of risk reduction.

Passage of this bill would override the ability of local communities to decide for themselves whether or not their youth will participate in a sex education program.

Additionally, this bill would undermine local control by mandating that every district teach sex education from a risk-reduction (versus risk-avoidance and/or primary prevention) perspective. It is our belief that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not effective, nor is it helpful, in providing for each communities unique needs and beliefs.

- 2) HB 5163 contains vague terminology, including the term "comprehensive". This term can mean risk reduction or risk avoidance (abstinence-centered) and needs further clarification. We would also like to point out that the term "medically-accurate" is inadequate since peer-reviewed journals provide conflicting information on the effectiveness of both abstinence-centered education as well as "comprehensive" education programs.
- 3) Given the state's current fiscal crisis, mandating this type of educational requirement will result in the state assuming financial obligation for sex education, as required by Headlee. We would like to suggest that such spending would be ineffective and irresponsible.

*MASH* welcomes continued dialogue with legislative officials and any *MASH* member would welcome the opportunity to share more about their abstinence-centered program with you. It is my hope that the points I've offered this morning provide some understanding that you may find helpful during your deliberation of this legislation.

Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.